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Preface

This special issue contains expanded versions of nine invited lectures given at the 8th International Conference on Differential Geometry and its Applications, held in Opava, Czech Republic, during August 27–31, 2001. It represents, together with the volume *Differential Geometry and its Applications, Proceedings* (Mathematical Publications, Vol. 3, Silesian University in Opava, 2002), the range of topics discussed in the following parallel sections of the Conference:

- A) Riemannian Geometry (headed by Oldrich Kowalski),
- B) Geometric Structures (headed by Jan Slovak),
- C) Variational Analysis and Geometric Methods in Physics (headed by Demeter Krupka).

The conference was organized by the Mathematical Institute of the Silesian University in Opava in collaboration with other Czech universities. The Organizing Committee consisted of Demeter Krupka (chairman), Jarolim Bures, Josef Janyska, Ivan Kolar, Oldrich Kowalski, Olga Krupkova, Michal Marvan, Josef Mikes, Jana Musilova, Jan Novotny, Jan Slovak, and Jiri Vanzura. More than 160 mathematicians and mathematical physicists from 32 countries participated in the program of the conference.

I wish to thank all colleagues who kindly contributed to this issue by their research and survey articles. I also extend my thanks to the referees, as well as to the numerous staff of organizers of the meeting.

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